

This guide outlines temporary methods to follow when there is a contaminated water supply event following a Boil Water Advisory or when a biological contaminant is found in a water sample, i.e., total coliform or *E. coli*. During a contaminated water event, all uses of potable water in your food establishment will be affected: water for drinking, food preparation, handwashing, warewashing, and cleaning and sanitizing food contact equipment and surfaces.

The Health Department needs to pre-approve your plan or temporary methods before an emergency occurs. If food safety cannot be ensured by following these methods, **immediately stop food operations** and notify your Public Health Inspector.

Alternative Safe Water Sources

During a contaminated water supply event, stop food service and food handling if safe water cannot be provided by using boiled (then cooled) water or water from an alternative safe source. Prepackaged food can still be served.

The following are alternative safe water sources that can be used as drinking water, for food operations, and handwashing procedures as outlined in this guide:

- Boiled water – water that remains at a rolling boil for at least one minute, then cooled before use.
- Commercially bottled water.
- Hauled water from an approved public water supply in covered, food-grade containers that are clean and sanitized.
- Water from a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

More information on safe drinking water is available at:

www.epa.gov/ogwdw/faq/emerg.html.

Food Operations During a Contaminated Water Supply Incident

Icemakers

- Throw away existing ice and stop making ice.
- Use commercially made ice or ice made from boiled water or water from an alternative safe source.

Preparing Food Products Requiring Water

- Immediately stop preparing food with

potentially contaminated water.

- Throw away ready-to-eat (RTE) food that may have been prepared with or may have come in contact with contaminated water.
- Discard RTE food items stored with ice or displayed on ice that could have been made from contaminated water.
- Prepare food using boiled water or water from an alternative safe source.

Appliances and Equipment

- Stop use of post-mix machines, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water dispensers, and juice and tea dispensers.

Washing or Soaking Fresh Produce

- Use pre-washed, packaged produce.
- Use frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.
- Clean and sanitize sink with boiled (then cooled) water or water from an alternative safe source.
- Wash fresh produce with boiled (then cooled) water or from an alternative safe source.

Thawing Frozen Foods

Only thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process.

Handwashing Procedures

If no alternative handwashing procedures can be followed, food preparation must stop. Only prepackaged food may be served.

A handwashing station with non-potable water must be labeled as “non-potable” or otherwise identified to prevent its use for potable purposes.

When water has a *known biological contamination*, use these handwashing procedures:

- Use boiled (then cooled) water or water from an alternative safe source.
- Do not allow bare-hand contact with RTE food.

If handwashing facilities are *unavailable in the immediate area where prepackaged food is handled*, the following must be available:

- Approved hand sanitizer or disinfecting wipes must be used for cleaning hands.
- An operational handwashing sink or an alternative handwashing station must be provided in the immediate area of a toilet facility.

Alternative Handwashing Stations

If *no handwashing facilities with potable water are available*, the following procedures for an alternative handwashing station may be followed if food operations are to continue:

- Provide suitable, dispensable hand soap, disposable towels, and a wastebasket at the station.
- The station must be equipped using boiled (then cooled) water or water from an alternative safe source in a clean, sanitized container with a continuous-flow (i.e., gravity-fed) spigot allowing water to flow over one's hands into a catch bucket.
- The catch bucket must be emptied into an operational drain such as a janitor sink or toilet.
- Wash hands after emptying the catch bucket and before returning to food handling.
- No bare-hand contact with RTE foods.

Cleaning Procedures

Cleaning and Sanitizing Utensils and Tableware

During a Boil Water Advisory, it is recommended that you use single-service utensils and tableware.

Use the existing automatic warewashing machine with non-potable water **only** if the water temperature, cleaning agents, and heat

cycle sufficiently clean and sanitize utensils and tableware.

Cleaning the Facility

- Stop operations if cleanliness of the physical facility could risk food safety.
- Non-potable water may be used for mopping floors and cleaning other non-food contact surfaces.

Returning to Normal Operations

Recovery involves the necessary steps for returning to normal, safe business operations after a facility has a contaminated water supply event.

A food establishment or an area within the facility that was ordered to stop operations due to an imminent health hazard may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the Health Department.

Consider the following steps for returning to normal operations after safe water service has been restored and after the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted:

- Document the date and time when the Boil Water Advisory was lifted or when water was tested and deemed safe for use.
- Ensure that cleaning and sanitizing equipment such as warewashing machines, three-bay sinks, buckets, etc. are clean and sanitized.
- Flush pipes and faucets. Follow directions from your water supplier or run cold water faucets for at least five minutes.
- Equipment with waterline connections (e.g., post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections) must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces, utensils, and other equipment before use.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Replace filters in equipment such as water chillers or ice machines.